Sending out an SOS for the skies

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Body

SOS is a well-known Morse Code signal. A universal distress signal. Help. It is a calling from one person in trouble so that something can be done in order to save a life. Or maybe several lives. It's a sign that something has to be done now, or severe consequences may result.

The ozone layer is a shield. Where it rests in the stratosphere, some 20 to 50 kilometres above the Earth, it acts as a filter, screening out most of the sun's dangerous ultra-violet radiation.

UV rays are the rays from the sun that bring out color in skin that we commonly call a sun tan. But recently, you might have noticed a difference. People have been burning, and from less time out in the sun. The Earth's ozone layer is thinning, and if sunburn is an instant result, then what are the long term effects?

The decrease in ozone increases the incidence of skin cancer cases. Eye diseases are on the rise. The human immune system is weakened, making us more susceptible to disease. Crops and other vegetation are damaged. And plankton, the very basis of the marine food chain, is threatened because it is highly sensitive to UV radiation. What happens when you pull the foundation from a house?

The message is out there: the ozone layer can't take any more CFCs from our air conditioners or refrigerators or the manufacture of plastic foam.

Not only can't it take it, it won't. And, as we have already experienced, the effects are not light years away. They aren't some other country's problem. They are here and they are now. And it's time we did

For many, the question is always the same: where does one start? The winds of change are pointing the weather-vane towards the individual. The individual must change. Change is a difficult thing. When someone has been living a certain lifestyle for so long, change is feared. Change means an upset in balance. An upset in schedule. But at this point, as difficult as it may be, Change is necessary. Again, where does one start?

On Sunday, a rally with the acronym SOS will take place on Parliament Hill from 2 to 4 p.m. The SOS stands for Save Our Skies. If you are looking for place to begin, this may be it. Many people find that rallies are a great way to get active.

The word "active" is a miraculous word. I've seen people cringe at the mention of it. A few misconceptions are floating around about what it means to "get active." It doesn't necessarily entail lying in the path of an oncoming bulldozer, or chaining yourself to a tree. It can mean the simple act of writing a letter of concern to a political member, or even making a small change in lifestyle for the better. If you're looking to take the first step, come out and join us on Parliament Hill.

The time for change is now. This is our SOS call. The ozone layer is in serious need of your help.

Sending out an SOS for the skies

Sara Kemp is an OAC student at Canterbury High and an environmental activist

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